

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Strode College

February 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Assessments are set out in their reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. Each grade on the scale has the following descriptor:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 11/94

STRODE COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected 1-3 December 1993

Summary

Strode College in central Somerset is a well-governed and well-managed college which, in recent years, has successfully widened its curriculum to include a substantial range of vocational provision in addition to its GCE/GCSE and adult education programmes. The college has strong links with local schools, the careers service and community networks. Full-time students are supported by a thorough admissions and counselling process and an effective tutorial system. Levels of support for part-time students are being improved. The quality of teaching is generally good. Students achieve good success rates in external examinations. The college should further develop its computerised management information systems, ensure more consistent implementation of quality assurance procedures and continue to improve its accommodation. Other weaknesses are the limited links with industry and the inadequate resources in a few of the curriculum areas.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	2
Resources	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Social studies	2	Art and design	2
Hairdressing and beauty	2	Community education	2
Leisure	3	Learning support/students with learning difficulties	3
Business, administration	2	Science	3
Languages	3	Engineering	2
Humanities	2	Mathematics	3
Performing arts/media	2		

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	4
Responsiveness and range of provision	11
Governance and management	27
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	37
Teaching and the promotion of learning	51
Students' achievements	58
Quality assurance	68
Resources	75
Conclusions and issues	83
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 Strode College, Somerset, was inspected during the period 1-3 December 1993 and in a series of specialist inspections carried out over the preceding seven weeks.

2 The inspection involved 11 inspectors who spent a total of 59 inspector days in the college. Inspectors visited 154 learning sessions, examined samples of students' work, and held discussions with college governors, teaching and support staff, students, local employers, partner schools, the careers service, community representatives, parents and a representative from the training and enterprise council (TEC). They inspected aspects of cross-college provision in art and design, business administration, community education, engineering, hairdressing and beauty, humanities, languages, learning support, leisure, mathematics, performing arts/media studies, science and social studies.

3 The report is based on inspections carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Strode College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

4 Strode College in Street, Somerset opened as a tertiary college in September 1973. Prior to this, it had been a technical college which had developed from its foundation as a technical institute in 1899. It operates from one main site which it shares with Crispin School, one of its four 11-16 partner schools. It has a centre in Frome, 25 miles away in the north east of Somerset, and also uses other school and community premises. It is responsible for education services at HM prison, Shepton Mallet. The college also owns and manages Strode Theatre, which it regards as a very important part of its community provision. The community campus includes a swimming pool and a youth centre which are separately managed.

5 The college primarily serves the central area of Somerset. It provides a range of further education courses for full-time students and part-time day and evening students. At the time of the inspection it employed 353 staff, of whom 79 were full-time teaching staff (figure 1). There was a total enrolment of 4,020, which included 1,079 full-time students. Enrolments, expressed as full-time equivalents, for each of the curriculum areas are shown in figure 2.

6 The college's courses are organised in four curriculum groups: business, secretarial and leisure; mathematics, science and technology; arts (visual and performing) and communications (including humanities

and languages); and social studies (care, hair and beauty, and vocational foundation provision). Admissions, marketing, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) courses, community education, learning support, quality review and student services are organised on a cross-college basis.

7 Strode College's catchment area includes the towns of Street, Glastonbury, Langport, Wells, Shepton Mallet, Cheddar, Castle Cary and to some extent Frome, as well as numerous villages and small communities within a 15 mile radius which look to Strode for their post-school education. The college has four main 11-16 partner schools; one in Street, the others in Glastonbury, three miles away, and in Shepton Mallet and Langport both 12 miles away. The nearest post-16 providers are schools in Cheddar and Wells, Bridgwater College which is 12 miles to the west of Street, Yeovil College which is 16 miles to the south, and Somerset College of Arts and Technology 25 miles away at Taunton.

8 According to the 1991 census, the population of Mendip District Council, which covers the majority of this area, was 95,522. The unemployment rate in the district is 8.6 per cent compared with 8.3 per cent in Somerset and 9.3 per cent in the south west as a whole.

9 The largest employers in the area, apart from Strode College itself, are Clarks International Shoe Company and other footwear and leather manufacturers, Millfield School, local government, and a number of tourism companies. The majority of employees work for small organisations concerned with agriculture, environmental conservation, defence-related work, engineering, fabrication, plastics, electronics, tourism and leisure. The TEC's labour market assessment of autumn 1993 confirms that Somerset remains more dependent on manufacturing employment than the country as a whole. It states that over 23 per cent of all jobs in Somerset are in manufacturing, compared with 18 per cent nationally. The TEC's 1993-94 strategic plan focuses on care, manufacture, and the tourism and leisure sectors.

10 In its mission statement, the college aims to serve the social and economic needs of the community by providing a centre of excellence for education and training which gives individual care and guidance and which fosters personal achievement.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

11 The college demonstrates a high level of awareness of the National Targets for Education and Training. This is reflected in its strategic plan, its positive response to curriculum developments, especially National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) initiatives, and its flexible approach to the accreditation of prior learning.

12 Thirty-eight per cent of full-time students are currently studying for GCE A level and advanced supplementary (AS) examinations, 10 per cent

have started GNVQ courses and the remainder are on other vocational, foundation and access to higher education programmes. Part-time students are enrolled on a wide range of vocational and non-vocational courses: 1,366 students (186 full-time equivalents) follow vocational courses and 1,570 students (100 full-time equivalents) follow non-vocational courses. A small number of students are enrolled on higher education courses, including a social science degree course franchised from Bath College of Higher Education.

13 In recent years, the college has moved from a largely GCE A level provision with a small number of vocational courses and a separate adult education programme, towards a wider, more integrated curriculum. There are Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) programmes in art and design, business and finance, engineering, leisure, media studies, performing arts and social care. There are NVQs in hairdressing and beauty therapy, engineering and business administration, as well as a vocational foundation studies programme which offers students aged 16 a general one-year course. The college offers 30 A level, three AS level and 20 GCSE subjects, a range of supplementary studies and a general studies programme. The plans are to reduce the number of GCSE subjects in favour of new GNVQ programmes. This strategy has been discussed with partner schools, and joint marketing of GNVQs is being planned. Three GNVQs are currently offered in leisure and tourism at intermediate level, and in social care at both intermediate and advanced levels. The college plans to extend GNVQs into business studies, art and design, science, and hospitality and catering.

14 Links with higher education have been established through the college careers team and by the number of students progressing to universities and colleges. A degree course in social sciences has been jointly developed with Bath College of Higher Education and there is an access course leading to higher education, validated by the Western Counties Access Partnership, which carries some guaranteed places for successful students. In response to the changes being made by the Department for Education (DFE) in initial teacher training there have been some exploratory discussions between the college and Crispin and Millfield Schools, about the possibility of establishing a consortium to deliver initial teacher training.

15 There is a growing range of vocational and non-vocational part-time day and evening courses. The transfer of the Mendip area adult basic education service to the college has provided an active community resource with a learning centre at Frome. In addition, the college, through its role as a sponsor of FEFC-funded provision for adults in four local schools, is acting as a source of information about the Council's work.

16 The college has identified five main curriculum priorities: increased opportunities for adults with an emphasis on gaining new skills; programmes for women returners; extended access and progression for

all students; wider provision at foundation level; and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

17 The college provides support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who join mainstream classes. It has recently appointed a senior lecturer with specific responsibility for this area of work. There is a broad range of discrete provision within the college for adults with learning difficulties.

18 Students, generally, benefit from a good extra-curricular activities programme. Opportunities to participate in sport and other outdoor activities, and to join drama or music groups, are available to all full-time and part-time students. Many of them exploit these opportunities.

19 There is strong collaboration with partner schools. Regular contact and liaison is evident at all stages. For example, staff share expertise on the marketing and curriculum development of GNVQs and on profiling at National Curriculum Key Stage 4 to enable students to transfer to the college with their previous achievements formally recorded. The college has responded well to curriculum requests from local schools by planning for, or providing, new courses in Spanish, performing arts, hairdressing, leisure, catering and nursery nursing. There is a well-developed programme of joint marketing events, including attendance at school parents' evenings, open days, taster sessions and careers conventions. These events are appreciated both by parents and the partner schools.

20 The college is actively involved in local networks, which include the post-16 planning group, collaboration with a number of other colleges, the head teachers' development group and a number of curriculum groups. While incorporation has inevitably changed the college's relations with the local authority, a positive working relationship remains.

21 Community links are well developed. The college has a thriving and expanding community education programme and gives a high priority to its community work. Relationships within the community campus are very good and there are effective arrangements for the collaborative management of the site. There is a limited amount of outreach work based in school and community centres elsewhere.

22 The college has had limited success in establishing links with employers. Contacts exist mainly through work experience placements and student projects. There is a small range of full-cost courses for employers in training for assessment. Between 1989 and 1992 the college operated a business centre in Shepton Mallet providing information technology and management-related training for local industry. Its closure, on financial grounds resulting from the lack of demand, has reduced the college's opportunities for developing and co-ordinating links with business.

23 Relations with the TEC are strengthening. Work-related further education funding, provided by the Department of Employment and managed by the TEC, is currently supporting three projects on the accreditation of prior learning, flexible learning and women returners.

24 The college is playing an active role in the following initiatives: the Somerset County Compact proposal, which aims to forge closer links between education and industry in order to promote greater industrial awareness amongst students; the Central and North Somerset Technical and Vocational Education Consortium in partnership with local schools; the Access to Assessment Steering Group to encourage employers and employees to obtain NVQs; and the Careers Partnership Board which oversees the development of the county careers service.

25 The college has recently assembled an experienced and qualified marketing team to help implement its marketing plans. There is already evidence of targets being met. The college has a high profile in the local press which reinforces its positive community image.

26 Through its policy statements and actions, the college demonstrates a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. There are regular meetings of an equal opportunities action group. There have also been practical initiatives, including a women into management conference, the production of anti-discriminatory posters and the auditing of teaching materials for bias.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

27 The college has an active, effective and supportive corporation whose members fulfil their statutory responsibilities. The membership reflects the interests of the community, industry and commerce. There are 16 members: eight representing employers, the chief executive of the Somerset Training and Enterprise Council, the principal, two elected members of the college staff, one elected student and three members representing community interests.

28 Members have a clear understanding of their role. They focus on planning, policy-making and monitoring, leaving the day-to-day management of the college to senior managers. There is an effective committee structure. Committees have appropriate membership and clear remits. The comprehensive papers presented to board members enable them to examine and analyse college matters and to make informed and effective decisions. There is regular attendance at board and subcommittee meetings. Contributions and decisions are properly minuted.

29 The senior management team has five members who work well both as individuals and as a team. The style of operation is one of open debate followed by clear decision-making and allocation of responsibilities for action. The team interacts effectively with the board, regularly presenting it with papers for discussion. The senior management team also operates regularly as an extended group when it is joined by middle managers.

30 The strategic plan was produced after full consultation with board members and staff. It is linked to the curriculum plans produced by departments. Some curriculum development targets are currently being reviewed.

31 The college's unit of funding for 1992-93, inherited from the local education authority, is recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, as £2,921 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £2,436. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure are shown in figures 4 and 5. College budgets are controlled by members of the senior management team with the exception of the budgets for supplies and services which are devolved to the heads of sections.

32 The organisational structure of the college below senior management reflects the results of several previous reorganisations, some elements of which have been left in place as new ones have been introduced. There is, however, a clear understanding of individuals' responsibilities and accountability. A review of the college's organisation is planned which will enable middle managers to have increased budgetary and curriculum responsibility.

33 The college operates several management information systems: Further Education Management Information Systems (FEMIS) for student records, MicroCompass Ledger 2000 for financial records, a computerised timetabling system, and separate database systems for examinations, personnel and accommodation. There are no direct links between these systems, although the medium-term strategy is to provide one integrated system. Other, significant amounts of management information, including student destinations and accommodation usage, are compiled manually.

34 Enrolment targets set in agreement with curriculum group heads are generally being met. Data on retention rates and destinations are presented to both senior management and the board.

35 The deployment of staff and resources ensures the effective delivery of courses. The college recognises the importance of costing its services to assist managers in planning and decision-making. Some unit costs are already calculated and the process is continuing.

36 Appropriate college committees are in place to ensure effective monitoring of policies and practices for health and safety, student support and equal opportunities.

RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

37 The college has a central admissions team responsible to the director of community education and liaison. A feature of the admissions process is the excellent team work evident between teaching and support staff. This is facilitated by joint briefings on internal and external factors affecting admissions, comprehensive documentation, and annual staff development training including customer-care training for support staff.

38 The admissions process for full-time students is thorough and ensures a good match of students to courses in the light of their abilities and expressed needs. There is close liaison with the careers service and with partner schools.

39 Induction courses cover a wide range of relevant activities, including team-building, health and safety awareness, and an introduction to students' rights and responsibilities. Most students value the induction process.

40 The advice to students during pre-enrolment, enrolment and induction is impartial and of high quality, a judgment supported by the views of partner schools, parents and students themselves. The re-interview process and review of students' courses once examination results are known, is particularly thorough and frequently involves students in a discussion with the careers service to enable them to make effective choices. A further discussion takes place with the partner school, where a candidate has under-performed in external examinations, in order to ensure placement on the appropriate course. Partner schools value the trust placed on their judgments by the college during these discussions.

41 Documentation provided to students in the form of the prospectus, course leaflets and a student handbook is adequate, although some students would have welcomed greater detail on the course leaflets including more information on expected workloads. Arrangements for early transfer, both between courses and options, are generally effective.

42 The college admits students from 19 institutions including its four 11-16 partner schools, two colleges, and schools in the private sector. The college has four designated school liaison tutors who have a specific remit to facilitate transfer between schools and the college. There is a rolling programme of events throughout the year involving partner schools, parents and students.

43 To ensure more effective placement of part-time students, the college plans to provide a more integrated admissions, support and guidance system. A learning support co-ordinator and a student support manager have already been appointed and it is planned to appoint an educational guidance worker to deal with enquiries, provide academic and careers advice and increase adult enrolments.

44 There is effective diagnosis of the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses where the buildings are suitable for wheelchair access are indicated in the part-time course prospectus.

45 Accreditation of prior learning has been developing since September 1992. It is becoming an integral part of the profiling which takes place at admission. There are currently 10 staff who are accredited advisers and a further 56 are undergoing training.

46 There is a well-structured college tutorial system for full-time and part-time students. Each student has a personal tutor and there is a weekly timetabled group tutorial period. Student attendance is monitored effectively.

47 Records of achievement were piloted last year and modifications have been made as a result. Some staff training will be needed prior to

the introduction of records of achievement next year. Students in possession of national record of achievement profiles are encouraged to update them during their stay at college.

48 A general studies programme provides inputs on careers, opportunities in higher education, employment and personal development. Students particularly value the advice on higher education. They also benefit from a substantial programme of health education awareness-raising events which include the use of external speakers, drama productions, workshops, displays and projects.

49 The college has a well-established, professionally-trained counselling team, which has effective links with external agencies. The team has been strengthened by the recent appointment of a student support manager.

50 An effective partnership exists between the college and Somerset Careers Service which has been formalised in a comprehensive service level agreement to offer counselling and guidance on employment and progression to higher education.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

51 Fifty-five per cent of the 154 teaching sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses and in a further 35 per cent the strengths and weaknesses were balanced. The grades awarded to teaching sessions are summarised below.

Number of teaching sessions/grades awarded				
Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17	67	54	15	1

52 The overall quality of teaching was highest in social studies, business administration, humanities, performing arts, art and design and community education. Good lessons were characterised by thorough preparation related to clear and comprehensive schemes of work. There was a logical progression towards defined objectives which had been shared with the students. The work was challenging. Students were involved in a range of learning strategies which enabled them to draw on existing knowledge, experience and skills. Teachers used various means to check on the progress students had made in achieving the objectives of the lesson. Follow-up tasks were set to consolidate learning.

53 Some of the weaknesses evident in less effective lessons included the lack of clear learning objectives, the inappropriate pace of the work and the mismatch of materials and processes to students' needs and abilities. In a number of lessons the teaching was over directed and mechanically delivered, the links between theory and practice were insufficiently developed or students were given no opportunity to consolidate their learning.

54 Many of the assignments and project briefs given to students on vocational courses were well planned and creative. Criteria for the assessment of the work were explicit from the outset and students' progress was monitored and recorded. Some of the teaching areas for vocational courses had relevant visual displays, reflecting key vocational issues, which helped challenge and motivate students.

55 On most full-time courses, there was careful attention to students' personal and social development. This was particularly evident on social studies courses where work experience was an important element.

56 While care is taken to encourage students to take increasing responsibility for their work, occasionally there is insufficient attention to the acquisition of study skills including essay-writing skills and the organisation of portfolios.

57 Written work is set and marked on a regular basis and is accurately graded. In the best practice, marking is supportive and diagnostic. There are substantial comments on students' strengths and on the areas where improvements could be made. Demands on students to work in their own time varied considerably. Some students expressed concern about the uneven workloads arising from the bunching of assignment deadlines. In some cases, pre-course induction material was not marked or followed through and this caused frustration to students who were unable to relate the purpose of the tasks to subsequent programmes of study.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

58 The majority of students were well motivated and enjoying their studies. The students interviewed discussed their work with knowledge and enthusiasm.

59 The generally good relationship between staff and students generated a productive working atmosphere. Effective styles of teaching and strong tutorial support helped to develop students' confidence. As a result, students' oral presentations in social studies, hair and beauty, humanities and performing arts classes were often of a high standard. The quality of work produced by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also benefited from the close support given by teachers and tutors.

60 In most cases, students were developing appropriate levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in classrooms and workshops. High standards were achieved in some practical sessions and project work.

61 The performance of students in internal assessments and external examinations was generally satisfactory and often good. There were some highly creditable examination results in arts and humanities.

62 Between 1991 and 1993 GCE A level pass rates, grades A-E, averaged 85 per cent for full-time students, 82 per cent for part-time day students and 71 per cent for part-time evening students. These results can be set against the national average of passes for all students which

was 79.8 per cent in 1993. In 1993, college students achieved a 100 per cent pass rate in a number of subjects, including art and design, dress and fashion, music and law. Other subjects with good pass rates included communication studies (92 per cent), history (93 per cent), sociology (96 per cent), general biology (94 per cent) and social biology (94 per cent).

63 GCSE courses are taken by both full-time and part-time students across a range of subjects. In 1993, 66 per cent of students on full-time courses and 83 per cent of students on part-time day and evening courses achieved passes at grades A-C. The national average for all passes at grades A-C was 51.3 per cent. A 100 per cent pass rate was achieved by part-time students in French, art and design, dance, chemistry, biology, and environmental studies.

64 On the full-time BTEC national diploma courses, the pass rate for 1993 ranged from 90 per cent in engineering to 100 per cent in performing arts. A table published recently by the Department for Education shows that of the 128 students in their final year of study 95 per cent achieved their target qualifications. This performance puts the college towards the top of all institutions within the sector. On the part-time BTEC national certificate courses, the pass rate for 1993 ranged from 79 per cent in business studies to 83 per cent in social care.

65 On the full-time BTEC first diploma courses, the success rate for 1993 ranged from 93 per cent in business studies to 100 per cent in caring, design and engineering. The success rates for vocational courses in hairdressing and beauty varied from 18 per cent in epilation to 100 per cent in massage.

66 In 1993, the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) examination results in secretarial studies and keyboarding skills ranged for full-time students from 65 per cent at stage one to 80 per cent at stage three. Part-time day students achieved pass rates of 84 per cent at stage one and 80 per cent at stage three. The 29 part-time day students taking RSA counselling skills achieved a 97 per cent pass rate.

67 In 1991-92, average retention rates were over 82 per cent. The rates on individual courses were generally satisfactory. The college recognises the need to continue to improve retention rates across the college.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

68 Quality assurance at Strode College rests chiefly upon three processes: course review, internal verification, and staff review and development.

69 Course review is based on self-evaluation by the course teams and includes responses from students and employers. Procedures and documentation are not yet standardised. Course review action plans have produced some clearly identifiable improvements in the nature of project work in engineering courses, the quality of course information issued to GCE A level students and the range of second year specialist

options in the performing arts national diploma. However, these plans vary in format and in the degree to which they effectively identify those responsible for taking action and the timescale within which action should occur. Course managers are free to adapt review procedures to the needs of their own course and there is no consistent college-wide requirement that all course lecturers should evaluate their own work. Course provision is not monitored regularly against set criteria. Target setting for student achievement and customer service standards is applied inconsistently across the college.

70 The internal verification process involves trained verifiers auditing the work of curriculum areas other than their own. Principally, it involves the scrutiny of managers' handbooks and the subsequent production of action plans and targets for improvement. Although the process is limited to course management, it appears to be working effectively and could be widened to include other aspects of quality assurance.

71 The staff development programme is well resourced. It supports a wide range of cross-college activities including curriculum development and assessor training. Recent in-house staff training events have included assertiveness training for female support staff, a series of personnel management seminars, customer care workshops and basic management skills.

72 The staff review and development process for teaching staff is fully documented and thorough. It is expected to meet its target for completion of the two-year cycle by September 1994. There is no automatic process for formally recording the training needs which emerge during appraisal so that a reconciliation of individual needs with institutional priorities can be made. In contrast, the planned review and development procedures for support staff, scheduled to start in January 1994, involve identification of training needs as part of the interviews to be conducted by line managers.

73 There is an induction programme for new staff, whether or not they are new to the profession. Subsequently, there are formal processes of monitoring and support.

74 In response to the Charter for Further Education, the student support manager has produced draft charters for the college and for students. By September 1994, these will be supported by a pilot student complaints procedure and a review of student disciplinary procedures. As yet, the college does not enter into general learning contracts or agreements with students except where the performance of individuals has become a cause for concern.

RESOURCES

75 Approximately 76 per cent of the college's budget is spent on staffing. Staff are well qualified and in areas where work has declined, staff have responded by developing new skills. There are effective staff selection

and appointment procedures in place which involve exercises to test candidates' teaching abilities.

76 Technician staff are well managed. They are effectively deployed and provide satisfactory support to teaching staff and students. The amount of clerical support varies across the college but levels are generally satisfactory to meet needs.

77 The college has sufficient computers. It has adopted a standardised approach to software and basic word processing and integrated packages are available throughout the college. Some of the equipment is old and is unable to support new industrial-standard software. An outline cross-college development plan for information technology has recently been drafted in which hardware and software standards are specified.

78 There are 53 teaching rooms, 23 of which are in temporary demountable accommodation. There are shortcomings in refectory facilities, library space and much of the teaching accommodation. A major building programme is due to be completed in January 1994 involving the commissioning of a new three-storey block. Following this, there will be major extensions to the library, the refectory and student service accommodation, and refurbishment of existing permanent and temporary buildings. The programme will significantly improve accommodation for art and design, care and some engineering and science courses. Accommodation for music is generally poor. Accommodation for media studies will continue to be under pressure from student numbers.

79 Most of the teaching rooms are small and this is currently restricting the use of information technology, the delivery of core skills and laboratory work. Although the college is steadily improving facilities for students using wheelchairs, access to the accommodation is limited.

80 With the exception of some of the demountables, standards of decoration are satisfactory. Classrooms are clean and well-kept. The policy of allocating rooms to sections, and of identifying specialist rooms as bases for subjects and courses, has resulted in good standards of display in teaching areas.

81 There was a shortage of suitable books and materials for some social studies classes. There were also problems with equipment and materials for some social studies and science lessons and for some of the classes on new vocational courses. Otherwise, there is an adequate supply of equipment and materials to support the work in the curriculum areas. The availability of video playback facilities and off-air recordings is good and appropriate technician support is available.

82 The library has a good level of funding and it is well-resourced. There are two qualified librarians. In addition to the bookstock there are collections of slides, cuttings, papers and some reference material. The library should review the bookstock in business, mathematics and science to ensure that the holdings are relevant to course requirements and that

obsolete stock is discarded. There is a need to align library services in vocational areas to the requirements of the new GNVQ programmes. The planned library extension will alleviate the current pressure on study space, extend information technology facilities and provide a discussion area for students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

83 The college is making good progress towards fulfilling its aim of providing a centre for training and education which meets individual and community needs. Particular strengths of the provision inspected are:

- the effective governance and management
- the responsiveness to national targets for education and training and curriculum development
- the good liaison with local schools, the careers service, higher education and community networks
- the generally good standards of teaching and learning
- the good results in external examinations
- a thorough and well-documented admissions process which includes opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning
- an effective and well-structured system of tutorial support for all students
- the commitment to equal opportunities and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the effective recruitment and deployment of staff
- the comprehensive and well-resourced staff development programme.

84 If the college is to maintain and raise present standards, it should address the following issues:

- the development and co-ordination of links with employers
- the further integration of computerised management information systems
- the consistent and effective implementation of quality assurance procedures
- the continued strengthening of systems for admissions, support and guidance for part-time students
- the further development and dissemination of study skills
- the teaching resources in some curriculum areas
- continued improvement of accommodation to enable curriculum development plans to proceed
- continued improvement of wheelchair access to existing buildings.

FIGURES

1 Staff profile (1993-94)

2 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by curriculum area (1993-94)

3 Estimated income (1993-94)

4 Estimated expenditure (1993-94)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

Strode College: staff profile (1993-94)

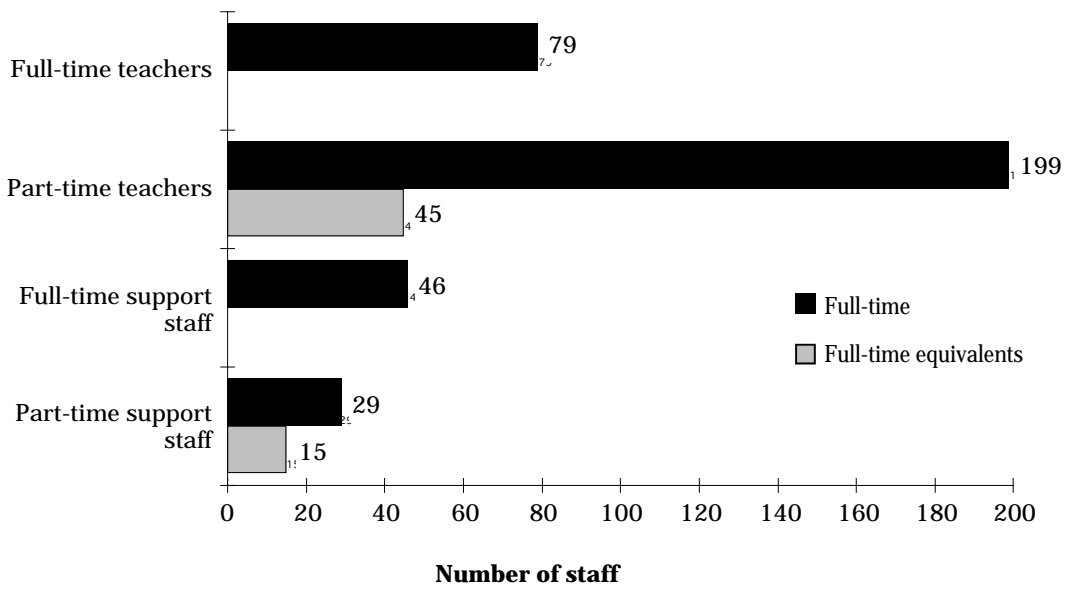


Figure 2

Strode College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by curriculum area (1993-94)

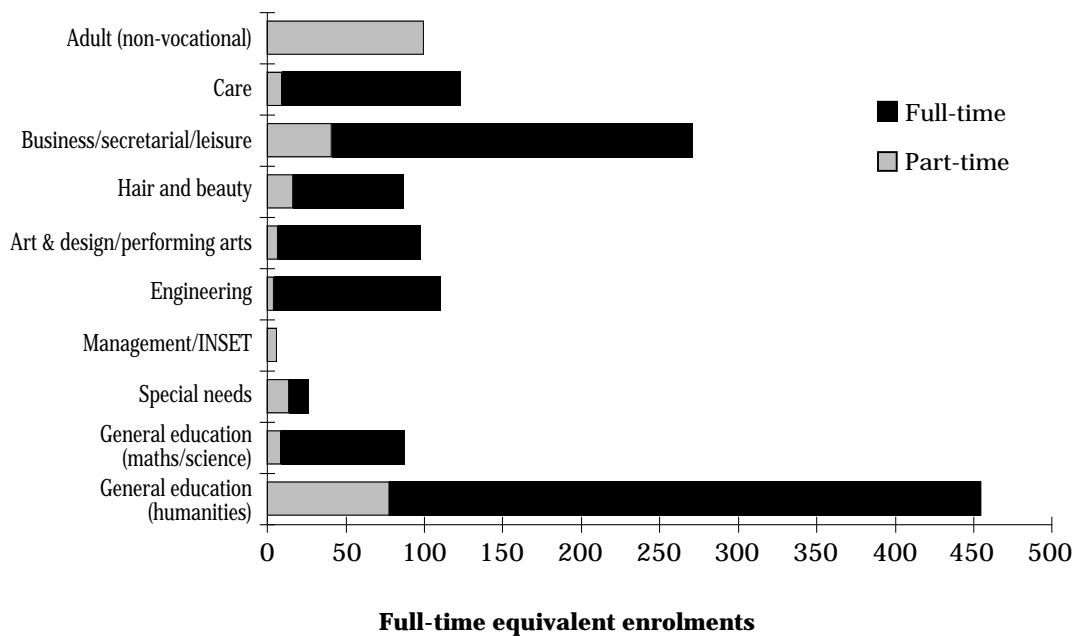


Figure 3

Strode College: estimated income (1993-94)

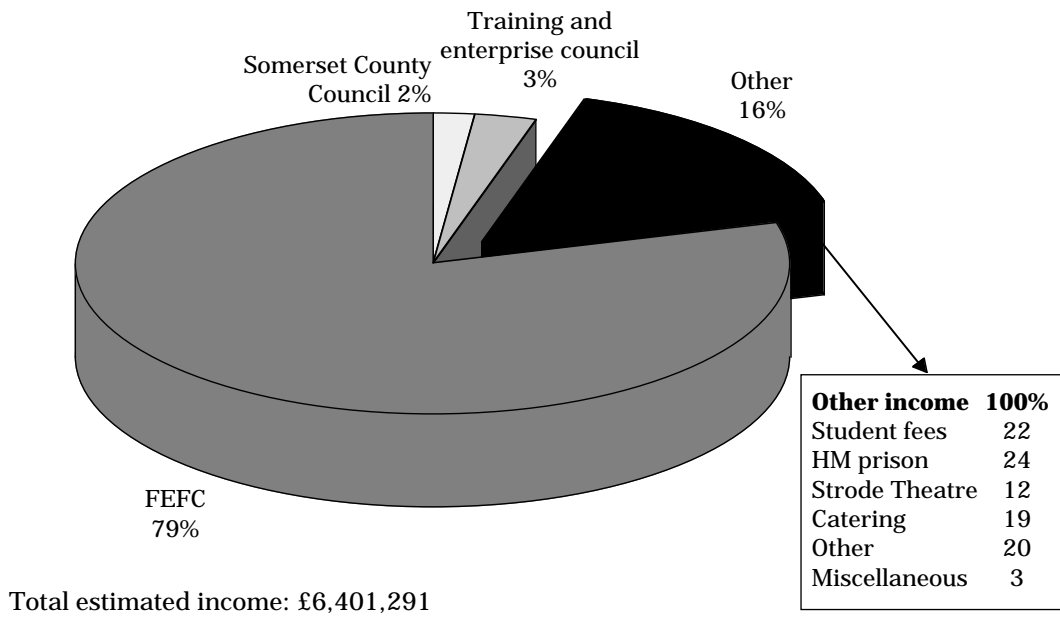
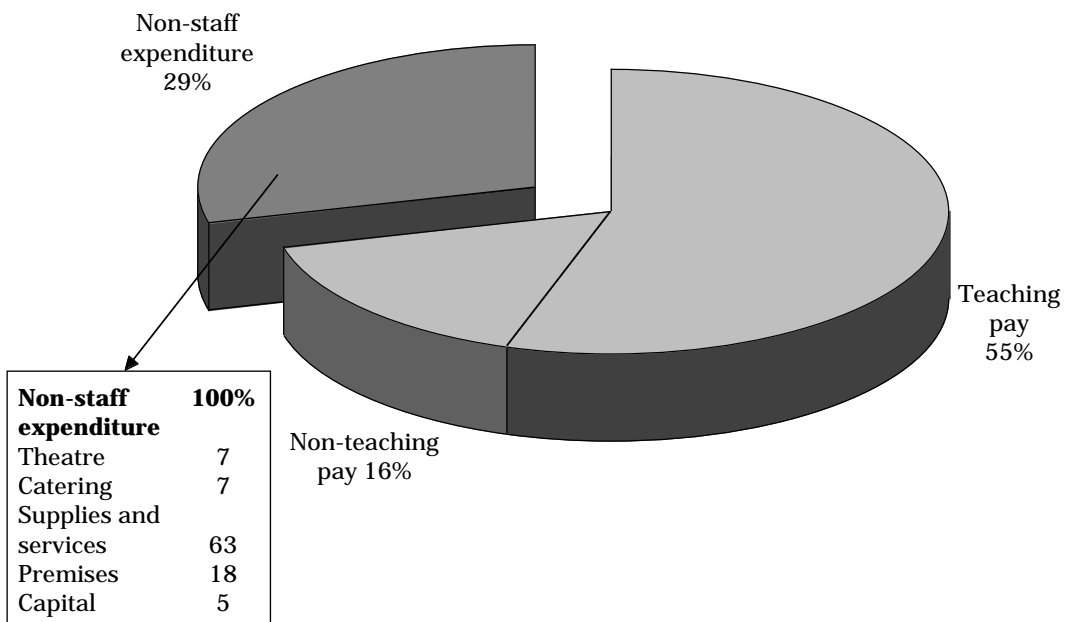


Figure 4

Strode College: estimated expenditure (1993-94)



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